UNITED NATIONS

CEDAW

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.
GENERAL

CEDAW/C/1997/II/3/Add.3
27 May 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
Seventeenth session
7-25 July 1997
Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Reports provided by specialized agencies of the United Nations on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

1. On behalf of the Committee, the Secretariat invited the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on 15 April 1997 to submit to the Committee by 15 May 1997 a report on information provided by States to UNESCO on the implementation of article 10 and related articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women which would supplement the information contained in the reports of those States parties to the Convention to be considered at the seventeenth session of the Committee.

2. Other information sought by the Committee refers to the activities, programmes and policy decisions undertaken by UNESCO to promote the implementation of article 10 and related articles of the Convention.

3. The report annexed hereto has been submitted in compliance with the Committee's request.

* CEDAW/C/1997/II/1.

Annex

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION: REPORT TO THE SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

(Relevant to article 10 and related articles)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Article 10 of the Convention calls for equal access for appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure them to equal rights with men in the field of education; the same conditions for career, vocational guidance and vocational training; access to the same choice of curricula; the elimination of stereotyped concepts of the roles of men and women at all levels and in forms of education; the same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education; the reduction of female student drop-out rates; access to participate in sports and physical education programmes; and access to educational programmes to ensure the health and well-being of families.

2. As stated in UNESCO's report to the sixteenth session of the Committee, in order to continue the momentum of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995) and the 28th session of the General Conference, the Director-General of UNESCO created a new structure for all matters concerning women and gender, consisting of a new Unit for the Promotion of the Status of Women and Gender Equality as the overall coordinator, and two specific programmes: Women and the Culture of Peace activities and women in the Mediterranean programme. The main framework of this work is UNESCO's commitments to United Nations decisions, namely, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the United Nations system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, regional platforms for action concerning women and the results of major recent United Nations conferences (Rio, Vienna, Cairo, Copenhagen, Istanbul).

3. UNESCO's main objectives regarding women and girls continue to be the nine principle objectives that were presented at the Beijing Conference as UNESCO's agenda for gender equality and subsequently endorsed by the 28th General Conference of UNESCO as an integral part of UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy 1996-2001. The following is a presentation of UNESCO's programmes and activities since the sixteenth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, relevant to article 10 and related articles of the Convention which could contribute to the Committee's consideration of the reports of States parties.

II. LITERACY AND EDUCATION

4. Besides promoting the right of women and girls to education as a fundamental human right and a key to development, UNESCO's activities focus increasingly on the education of women and girls within the context of rural communities. This is particularly true in the African region where a

comprehensive effort is being made to link formal and non-formal educational activities and to tailor them to the needs and aspirations of the community. Priority is given to the development of functional training programmes and centres and community centres through which non-formal education that links training and work experience can be provided to women and girls. The training of teachers and/or animators for such centres is also a top priority. In cooperation with external partners, particularly other United Nations agencies, an international campaign will be launched in 1998, promoting the rights of women and girls to education, as requested of UNESCO in paragraph 87 of the Beijing Platform for Action.[a]

5. Education also needs to prepare young people for the demands of adulthood and to fill the current vacuum in the guidance of youths. One approach in addressing these problems is the introduction of a guidance and counselling programme which continues beyond career guidance to self-development as a means to helping young girls to enter adulthood with confidence and a sense of purpose. With this in mind, a special project has been designed by UNESCO's Basic Education Programme for promoting girls' and women's education in Africa, "An African approach to help young people especially girls, to cope with social and economic changes in their societies". Project implementation is expected to begin in 1998.

6. Ten First Ladies from French-speaking African countries expressed their commitment to the education of girls and women during a meeting held at Ouagadougou from 17 to 21 February 1997. Organized by UNESCO and the Paris-based Fondation pour l'Enfance, the meeting was the second in a series of regional meetings to determine if countries that have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child are following up on their obligations. Equal access to early education for girls, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which addresses the equal status of girls in society, is a priority for UNESCO. A similar meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean on the Convention will take place in Colombia in 1998 and will receive the personal support of the region's First Ladies.

7. UNESCO's Global Strategy for Women in Higher Education and Development takes full account of all instruments, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, for its legitimacy. In February 1997, at the Fifth NGO Consultation, a round table was held on the complex issue of "Women graduates and the labour market, which is particularly important in present circumstances. The recommendations stressed the need to root all action in favour of women in law for maximum impact. Hence the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is implicit in this matter. Similarly, UNESCO's World Conference on Higher Education, to be convened in September 1998, will adopt a comprehensive plan of action for the reform of higher education systems throughout the world guided by the principle of merit, as stipulated in article 26, paragraph 1, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ("higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit").[b]

8. The Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) is undertaking country studies on the situation of literacy and basic education with regard to women's and girls' education in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan through

collaboration with the Asian-South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE). These will be published in the respective countries, and will be translated into local language to ensure wider dissemination. A final report will contain an overview. It is intended that the results of the studies would serve as a basis for policy recommendations and implementation in the Asian countries. The report will be also presented at a High-level Consultation Meeting on Education for Girls and Women to be held at Nagarkot, Nepal, from 12 to 14 August 1997, organized by APPEAL. The meeting will be attended by Permanent Secretaries, members of each national planning council responsible for the education sector from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, UNESCO, ASPBAE/World Education and other development partners.

9. In Eastern and Central Europe, UNESCO has been requested to initiate and reinforce gender studies at the university level, the training of women for management and decision-making posts and to provide "legal literacy" particularly geared to parliamentary democracy and a market economy. Further work is required regarding public awareness of the extreme forms of discrimination suffered by women, such as rape and other forms of violence, particularly in situations of armed conflict, and the eradication of sexist/gender stereotypes in educational programmes and school textbooks and other pedagogical tools (toys, games, etc.). Attention will focus on the setting up of a subregional women's centre which would assist the participating countries in developing a regular communication flow and exchange of experiences on how to assist women and girls in the changed socio-economic circumstances resulting from the transition from a centrally planned to a market economy.

10. Assistance to women and children who have been victims of rape as a tool of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (resolution 11.1.II.6, adopted by UNESCO's 27th General Conference) continues to be a priority for UNESCO. Three programmes will be developed in the next two years on: (a) strengthening the reception capacity and care of women and children victims of war; (b) the creation in the town of Gorazde of a centre for initiatives to combat postwar marginalization and exclusion by, inter alia, using manual work as therapy; this will also include a basic medical-psychological unit focusing on problems related to the sexual health of these women, and the drafting in cooperation with the Medica Centre in Zenica of a manual to be used by people working in the reception centres and therapists, and (c) strengthening of the role of women in the process of peace and democracy and of their participation in the economic and social life of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

11. In the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, a regional preparatory conference was held at Brasilia from 22 to 24 January 1997 to discuss UNESCO's Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONITTEA V), held at Hamburg, Germany, from 14 to 18 July, where the issue of women's empowerment through education was strongly supported. The declaration and recommendations of the preparatory Conference continually emphasized that education for the young and adults must promote, at all levels and modalities of the educational process, gender fairness to guarantee equal opportunities to women and men. Furthermore, one recommendation entitled "The education of young and adults as a means to empower women", contains 17 chapters dedicated to this subject. Priority will be given to initiatives that aim to empower women by providing them with the tools for change in education, socio-economic opportunities, civic and cultural

participation in their communities and basic human rights, as well as to promoting measures that tend to guarantee the equality of opportunities in the education and training of women who work, and promoting training programmes in matters of gender addressed to male and female teachers, to put in place adequate evaluation and monitoring to assure the implementation of an education for equality, fairness and respect for the rights of girls and women.

12. The Protocol of cooperation signed between UNESCO and the Islamic Organization for Education, Sciences and Culture (ISESCO) in early 1996 for a two-year period suggests at least one of the priorities regarding women and girls in the Arab region, that is, providing ISESCO with expertise in defining the research methodology to be used in its member States for reviewing what kind of education is available to women.

III. CAREER AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE - VOCATIONAL TRAINING

13. The project on "Scientific, technical and vocational education of girls in Africa" aims to enhance gender equality in enrolment, quality and achievement in scientific, technical and vocational education, through the encouragement of local initiatives and by stimulating political action. The main thrust is to promote gender-inclusive policies and their implementation, notably concerning a basic scientific, technical and vocational curriculum which responds to the needs of those pupils who will enter the working world as well as those who will continue to study scientific and technological subjects in secondary and higher education. The project's needs assessment phase, which is currently being completed, will lay the basis for future activities, such as subregional workshops and support to national activities. Namibia is envisaged to be included in the project, and a national survey has been undertaken to assess girls' and women's participation in science and the underlying reasons for their low participation, including the objectives and organization of education, expectations of boys and girls, and the practice and image of science and its presentation for learning.

14. Similarly, in order to provide opportunities for young women to obtain access to specific scientific fields of study (marine science, ecology, geology and hydrology) the science sector under the framework of the four intergovernmental programmes - Man and the Biosphere, the International Geological Commission Programme, the International Hydrological Programme, and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission - grants fellowships to young women scientists. Within the International Hydrological Programme, the project on "Women, water supply and use" provides support to African women scientists to continue their education in the field of water resources as well as the organization of non-formal education programmes in rural areas. (The reporting States at the current session of the Committee are members of the International Hydrological Programme.)

IV. THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATORY STEREOTYPES OF MEN AND WOMEN

15. Special attention continues to be given to the elimination of discriminatory stereotypes of women. This component is included in all special projects concerning women undertaken within UNESCO's education sector - Promoting Girls' and Women's Education in Africa; Science; Technical and Vocational Education of Girls in Africa; Women, Higher Education and Development; and Women, Science and Technology - as well as in other programme sectors of UNESCO that are working on special projects concerning women. This action will be further reinforced especially in view of the conclusions of the International Parliamentary Union Conference on the partnership of men and women in politics (New Delhi, February 1997), which called upon UNESCO to assist in a fundamental attitude change regarding women/gender through formal and non-formal education.

16. The special project on "Women, science and technology" aims at upgrading the intellectual potential of women scientists by offering them new means of action, through the creation and reinforcement of networks of women scientists working in the field of research, education and industry. The Helena Rubinstein prize, awarded for the first time in 1997, is another important means of encouraging women scientists from all over the world. Likewise, an official UNESCO medal marking the 130th anniversary of the birth of Marie Curie which will be available in November 1997. Out of 42 UNESCO medals, it will be the first to honour a woman.

V. TOWARDS A "GENDER-SENSITIVE" CULTURE OF PEACE PROGRAMME AND THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

17. In the Asia-Pacific region, UNESCO's Regional Unit for Social and Human Sciences in Asia and the Pacific (RUSHSAP) implements activities related to human rights, including women's peace rights, within the framework of the cross-disciplinary project "Towards a culture of peace". This project focuses on the respect for and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, rejection of violence and all forms of discrimination, and attachment to the principles of justice and solidarity, tolerance and understanding among nations, groups and individuals alike. In line with the Beijing Conference, the project contributes to the promotion of better knowledge and the effective application of women's rights.

18. Two other projects undertaken in the Asia-Pacific region focus on specific issues involving women's rights:

(a) The project on "Women's equality of rights with men in economic life". Guidelines for case studies on the empowerment of women in economic life, particularly in small and medium-size enterprises, have been prepared with a view to supporting the promotion of human rights (including women's rights) and democracy. Case studies will examine broad national legal frameworks governing and/or influencing the participation of women in their country's economic life, in order to assess the impact of these national laws on women's equality of rights with men.

Women's NGOs in the Lao People's Democratic Republic - the Laotian Women's Union - and in Viet Nam - the Viet Nam Women's Union - are finalizing case studies on their respective countries, while the Self-Employed Women's Organization-SEWA, in Ahmedabad, India, has also been requested to document its long struggle. Their expertise will guide other women's NGOs in the elaboration of their respective frameworks of action. These case studies will be submitted as background documents for the Subregional Workshop on Women in Small and Medium Enterprises, which will take place at the UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (PROAP) at Bangkok from 16 to 19 June 1997. This workshop will be attended by representatives of government agencies, research institutes, associations, cooperatives, United Nations agencies (the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)/Women in International Development (WID), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)), the Asian Institute of Technology and other institutions involved in women/gender and development issues. Participating countries include the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Western Samoa, India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Thailand and the Philippines. The analysis and discussion of the case studies will assist women's NGOs in elaborating relevant frameworks of action, presenting new ways for the promotion and the equitable implementation of women's basic rights, specific to women's economic participation;

(b) The project on "Women's involvement in the democratization process". A monograph is being prepared by RUSHSAP on women's involvement in the democratization process (Sri Lanka, January-June 1997), to be based on a case study undertaken in collaboration with the Centre for Women's Research in Sri Lanka, based on guidelines developed by RUSHSAP. The case studies document strategies and modalities that civil society and individuals, particularly women, devise within their country's political, economic, social and cultural context to maintain peace and ensure that the dynamics of democratic processes are functioning and that these processes all benefit the sections of the community most affected by conflict. The conclusions to be drawn from the study will advance women's specific strategies (consultation, dialogue, decision-making) to ensure that their involvement in the democratization process protects them as well as their communities and their societies from further self-destruction. The monograph is expected to be published in 1997.

19. Emphasis is also placed on analysing gender-related factors that hinder or encourage the transition from a culture of war and violence to one of peace, and appropriate actions in this context. While women's roles and status have been broadly debated over the recent decades, men's roles have been examined only in a few countries, even though the question of the forms of masculinity has recently been addressed in a series of publications. An expert group meeting will take place from 25 to 28 September 1997 in Oslo on: "Male roles and masculinities in the perspective of a culture of peace". The meeting is expected to contribute to a broadened understanding of gender socialization within different cultural contexts and its implications for the development of a culture of peace, with a special focus on the socialization of boys and men. Similar meetings are foreseen in other regions, building on the findings of the Oslo meeting.

20. The UNESCO project on "A lifeline for Afghan women" has been allowed to continue by the Taliban authorities, who have imposed a strict version of Islamic rule in the areas they control. The project uses a radio soap opera and a cartoon magazine to transmit key health and education messages to women and their families who have suffered from nearly two decades of armed conflict. Launched via the BBC World Service, the New Life cartoon magazine was introduced as a follow-up to the soap opera and to provide supplementary reading material for those who have recently learned to read.

VI. THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF FAMILIES

21. As the lack of access of women and girls to health care education is one of the 12 critical areas of concern identified by the Beijing Platform for Action, and taking into account as well the need to combat HIV/AIDS through a recognition of gender factors and its specific growing impact on women, UNESCO cooperates with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the co-sponsoring agencies within the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Working Group on Gender. A project proposal prepared by UNESCO's Programme for Preventive Education and Communication on women and AIDS will be implemented in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

22. UNESCO's Programme for Preventive Education and Communication focuses on activities designed for societies where men have traditionally played a dominant role and women have little control over their sexual behaviour and reproductive patterns. These activities have included workshops in India and Nepal for representatives of grass-roots level women's organizations in order to promote education for developing the awareness, knowledge and skills to protect themselves from STDs in general and HIV/AIDS in particular. The programme also has as one of its main objectives the integration of education for the prevention of HIV/AIDS in the school curriculum. Since the education of girls has been severely affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic in many African countries, the introduction of HIV/AIDS prevention in the school setting is a vital factor in containing the disease and changing attitudes towards girls' education.

23. Malaria remains one of the developing world's most serious public health problems, with more than 2 billion people at risk. Globally, the malaria situation is worsening, particularly in poorer countries. In Africa, malaria is responsible for the death of an estimated 1 to 2 million children every year. An agreement was signed between UNESCO and the World Health Organization (WHO) to strengthen the role of education in malaria prevention. Its aim is to mobilize schools, children, parents and communities to promote malaria-safe behaviours such as personal protection measures, early diagnosis and treatment and community-based prevention. As women play a key role in health education for the prevention of malaria since they make critical decisions with regard to the care and management of sick children, special attention will be given to their education.

24. Practical advice on health, childcare, agricultural methods, vocational training, job opportunities and the role of women in the implementation of local development actions will be broadcast through UNESCO's pilot rural community radio project known as "Women speaking to women", which is managed primarily by

women, on issues of interest to women. The Communications Division of UNESCO aims to create such stations in the Caribbean, Asia and Africa. In Africa, stations will be established in Cameroon, Malawi and Cape Verde. All stations should be operational by the end of 1997. The programmes will also enable women to express their opinions on issues of direct concern to them, and to develop media and communications skills in these rural areas.

Notes

[a] A/CONF.177/20, chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[b] General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).